CHAPTER 4

MYTHS AND FACTS

INTRODUCTION

The connection between sexism and violence against women has been explored in the "*Imbalance of Power*" section of this manual. We saw also this violence can take a number of forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, financial and social.

Domestic violence and sexual assault have long been shrouded in myths. These myths are the manifestation of the connection between sexism and woman abuse. Many of the myths have perpetuated the mistaken notion that the victim has "provoked" her own abuse. It is important to refute the myths surrounding battered women and sexual assault victims in order to understand why these abuses occur, what their effects are on women and how they can be stopped.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Myth: Domestic violence is isolated and infrequent.
Fact: Domestic violence is epidemic. According to the FBI, a woman is Beaten every 9 seconds in the United States reports that there are cases of domestic violence each year however, the FBI estimates that only 1 in 10, cases are ever reported. 2/3 of all marriages experience at least one violent episode, while 1 in 4 marriages experience ongoing violence.

Myth: Only poor and minority men batter women; this is an urban problem.
Fact: Men of all socio-economic classes and races abuse women. Domestic violence is very much a problem in rural areas, where physical isolation makes it easier for the batterer to hide his crime and more difficult for the victim to access resources.

Myth: There are just as many women who batter their husbands as men who batter their wives.
Fact: 95% of domestic violence cases involve a man battering a woman. The remaining 5% include battering within lesbian and gay couples, as well as women abusing men. Some battered women use their fists or weapons to defend themselves. In the process, they often place their lives in jeopardy and may end up seriously injured or dead.

Myth: when a man hits his wife or girlfriend, it's usually nothing serious just a slap or a punch.
Fact: Studies of battering relationships show that the level of violence escalates over time, becoming more intense and more frequent.
A study by Stark and Flitcraft indicates that 22-35% of emergency department visits by women are related to domestic violence. According to the FBI, spouse murders account for 1/8 of all homicides in the U.S.

Myth: Battered women exaggerate the extent of the injuries sustained in assaults by their husbands and seek unnecessary medical attention.
Fact: Battered women frequently do not seek medical attention for their injuries. When they do go to a physician, they are often not candid about the cause of the injury. Instead of telling the truth about their victimization, they may attribute their injuries to an accidental bump or fall. Many injuries remain untreated.

Myth: Batterers are out of control.
Fact: The fact that the abuse is selectively directed at his partner indicates that the batterer has a certain amount of control over his actions. Very rarely are others in the batterer's professional and social life the victims of his violence.

Myth: Drinking alcohol causes battering.
Fact: Alcohol is involved in about half the battering situations, but it is not the cause. Although alcohol lowers inhibitions and makes the violence more acceptable, it is merely a component of the battering relationship.

Myth: Women assaulted by their husbands usually confide in a friend or law enforcement officer about the abuse.
Fact: Battered women do not usually tell a friend, family member or police officer about the abuse until they realize that the violence is intentional and escalating into a potentially life-threatening situation. Women do not tell others about the abuse from their husbands for many reasons. Some women are ashamed because they've been made to feel that the beatings were their fault; some women what to protect their abusers; some women hope that if they don't say anything, it will get better.

Myth: The police can't do anything because abused women don't want to prosecute and they usually drop the charges.
Fact: This is a common myth among many police officers; however, the Police Foundation stated in 1983, that "arrest may be the most effective approach " to deterring a man from repeated violence. The fact is women do file charges and they do obtain protection from abuse orders from the courts. Those women who fail to follow through with criminal charges or a PFA often do so because they are afraid that their abuser will respond with even more violence.

Myth: Battered women provoke abuse.
Fact: On the contrary, battered women often seek to placate, accommodate and please their abusers. In doing so, they may drastically modify their lives. Batterers use any incident, internal or external, relevant or irrelevant, to their relationship as an excuse for violence.

DATE BATTERING

Myth: "Girls like to be roughed up a little."
Fact: Studies show that teen women think violence has a bad effect on their relationships. Nobody likes to be "roughed up."

Myth: A girl is responsible for her being battered if she hits first.
Fact: She is responsible for her own actions but that does not mean she is responsible for the boy's violence if he batters.

Myth: If a boy has been bugged by his parents or teachers, or uses alcohol and drugs it's not his fault if he blows up and hits his girlfriend.
Fact: Stress and the use of drugs and alcohol are only excuses for his behavior. If he believes in the right to use violence in a relationship, he will. The reasons a young man batters: he wants to have power and control in the relationship; he believes in the right to use violence; he follows the sex-role stereotypes of the aggressive male.

Myth: "If she didn't flirt so much then her boyfriend wouldn't have to hit her."
Fact: Victim blaming has been used to remove responsibility from the batterer. A girl's behavior does not cause the abuse.

Myth: "If she doesn't like being pushed around and hit, why does she date him?"
Fact: There are many reasons why a girl would stay in a relationship in which she is abused. Liking violence is not one of them.

Myth: If you love someone enough, you can change the abusive behavior.
Fact: Persons will change only if they accept responsibility for their battering and have a desire to change.

Myth: Once married, the abuse by the batterer will stop.
Fact: The marriage license is often viewed by the batterer as a license to continue or escalate the battering.

RAPE

Myth: Most rapes are spontaneous assaults.
Fact: In fact, 58% of single-perpetrator rapes are planned; 83% of pair rapes are planned; 90% of group rapes are planned. Planning could range from deciding to rape anyone that day, or in that neighborhood, to choosing a specific victim and using elaborate preparation.

Myth: Most rapes happen on the street, late at night.
Fact: Statistics have shown that the location of a rape is usually indoors and rarely on the street. Rape occurs most often in the victim's home or the attacker's home, or in a car.

Myth: Most women react hysterically to a rape, and feel ashamed and guilty.
Fact: Victim reactions to a rape can describe a wide range of emotions in the hours immediately following a rape. Victims may be either controlled or expressed: controlled victims may be calm, composed, or subdued; expressed victims may be restless, tense, crying or smiling in an anxious manner. The primary feeling of rape victims is fear--most feel lucky to have survived an encounter with death. Their feelings may include humiliation, degradation, embarrassment, anger, revenge, guilt, or shame.

Myth: Women falsely accuse men of rape.
Fact: The FBI stated that false claims of rape are no higher than that for other major crimes, or 2% of reports to law enforcement agencies. Although rape is the most often reported violent crime, it is also the most under-reported. It has been estimated that the actual number of rapes is 10 to 20 times higher than the number reported. "Rape is not an infrequent offense; it is simply an infrequently reported offense." (Chapman and Gates, Victimization of Women)

Myth: A woman cannot be raped by her husband.
Fact: Though many women may not perceive themselves as victims of marital rape, marital rape exists on the continuum of taking advantage of sexual access, to forcing unacceptable sexual acts, to violent sexual assaults as part of a battering relationship. Current research has shown that 1/3 of badly battered women who seek the assistance of domestic violence programs have been raped by their husbands. A study by Diana E. H. Russell revealed that 14% of the women who had ever been married had been raped by their husbands. I n 1985, Pennsylvania enacted a law against spousal sexual assault, making it a second-degree felony. Spousal sexual assault must be reported to a law enforcement agency within 90 days.

ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

Myth: Most women who are raped, are raped by strangers.
Fact: At least two-thirds of all rapes involve persons who are known to each other. 1/4 of college women have been victims of rape or attempted rape and close to 90% knew their attackers.

Myth: Rape has to do with sex and passion.
Fact: Rape is not about sexual desire but is a crime of violence express through sex. The rapist wants power and control over the victim. Force and/or the threat of force is used.

Myth: When a woman says "no" she means "yes"
Fact: This myth denies the man's responsibility in the rape. If a woman says no to sex then the man must respect that. The fact is in the eyes of the law no means no!

Myth: Women cry rape to get back at someone.
Fact: According to the FBI only 1-2% of rape reports are suspected to be false. This is approximately the same rate of false reports as that for all other crimes. And for every rape that is reported 10 to 20 are estimated as being unreported.

Myth: Women provoke rape by their behavior and dress.
Fact: No one asks to be raped. Women have a right to dress anyway they wish. It is the rapist who decides to force sex on the victim. The rapist looks for a woman who is accessible and vulnerable not one who is sexy.

Myth: Rape is the victim's fault.
"If she did not want to do it, why did she go to his place?'
" She knew what kind of guy he was!"
"You know how she gets when she is drunk."
"Oh, she sleeps around."
"What did she expect?"
Fact: Statements such as these put the blame on the victim and not on the offender. Rape is never the victim's fault. Even if she did something that puts her in a vulnerable position, she did not ask to be sexually assaulted.

Myth: It's not as traumatic to be raped by someone you knew.
Fact: Just because the victim knows the rapist doesn't make it any less a crime or any easier to deal with. The emotional impact of acquaintance rape is very similar to that of stranger rape. Also, in acquaintance rape, she may have a strong feeling that no one will believe her. Her trust in others and in her own judgment is violated.

Myth: Rapists are mentally ill.
Fact: The majority of rapists are ordinary guys who believe in the myths of the stereotypical macho male and have no history of mental disorders.

Myth: "Rape will never happen to me."
Fact: ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE AT RISK FOR RAPE Even men and boys are victims of rape. 1 in 4 women, 1 in 6 men will be raped in their lifetime.

CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

Myth: Children are promiscuous and seductive, and adolescents in particular may provoke sexual assault by their behavior.
Fact: The Southern California Rape Prevention Study reports that the two kinds of assaults commonly committed by adults against children are forcible rape and coercion situations. Children do not ask to be abused. Responsibility for sexual assault lays with the adult, not the child.

Myth: Children make up stories to get back at someone or to gain attention.
Fact: Children rarely lie about sexual assault. Younger children do not understand what it is and older children are often too embarrassed or frightened to disclose actual assaults, let alone make up false ones.

Myth: Telling children to avoid strangers and keeping them at home is a guarantee against assault.
Fact: 75 to 85% of assailants are known to the family; 60% of attacks occur in the victim's or assailant's home.

Myth: It will only traumatize children to frankly discuss assault with them.
Fact: Vague warnings like "don't take candy from strangers" can confuse and frighten children. If assault is presented as a safety issue, it is no more frightening than discussing fire or playground safety. Children's fantasies are often worse than the reality; concrete information sensitively presented can empower them and help rid them of nameless fears.

Myth: Children are powerless to protect themselves.
Fact: Children can be taught to use their own resources to protect themselves: to kick, yell, run, get help, etc. The key is that they know there is someone to whom they can turn to for immediate and unquestioning help.

Myth: Sexual assault of children is a relatively rare occurrence.
Fact: Child sexual assault is three times as common as child battery. reported that 25% of American women had been molested during childhood. Subsequent research indicates that this is a conservative figure. It is estimated that between 50% and 80% of assaults go unreported.

Myth: Child sexual assault is an isolated incident that happens out of the blue and is usually an extreme form of abuse.
Fact: On the contrary, this kind of abuse develops gradually over a period of time and generally will be repeated unless it is stopped. While the forms of abuse may become more serious as time goes on, the overwhelming majority are not of the torture/murder variety sensationalized in the media.

Myth: Assailants are strangers.
Fact: Between 75% and 85% of assailants are known to the family.

Myth: Child assaulters are psychotic or emotionally disturbed people whose sexual drive is misdirected towards children.
Fact: These offenders, the overwhelming majority male, are otherwise normal people who have difficulty controlling their aggressive--not sexual-impulses. Most have normal sexual relationships with adults. In one study, 31% of attacks involved verbal threats, 46% physical force. Child sexual assault like adult rape, is a crime of violence, not of sex.

EXAMINING COMMON MYTHS AND FACTS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Myth #I: This is not the battering of women. It is spouse abuse and these are violent couples who hit each other.

- Fact # I: Yes, some women are violent to their partners. But we will not understand battering by counting up the number of times

one person hits another. We must ask, "Who is terrified of whom?" "Who is hurt repeatedly"; "who is afraid to speak, go to school, take a job?" When you understand battering as a pattern of coercive control, probably 95% of the victims are women. In fact, according to National Crime Survey data from1973-1977, men commit 95% of all assaults on spouses.

Myth #2: Drugs and alcohol cause the violence.

- Fact #2: This explanation does not tell us why the target is women. Batterers use violence when drunk and when sober, Drinking frees him from responsibility, i.e. " I didn't know what I was doing." It does not explain why he abuses. Many batterers never drink.

  The alcoholic batterer must be treated for two separate problems—violence and drinking. He will not necessarily stop battering even if he gains control of his alcoholism.

Myth #3: Stress and psychopathology cause battering.

- Fact #3: These do not explain why the target is women. Many men under severe stress do not beat their partners. Many women under severe stress do not batter.

  Psychopathology does not explain why so many people, who test normal, batter. Of course some severely disturbed people are also violent. An alternative explanation is that battering is culturally approved behavior.

  Obviously, some batterers experience stress, but stress does not cause abuse. Some men choose to deal with stress violently. The batterer's belief in the right to control his partner and in the right to use violence to get his way is what causes a man to relieve his stress by beating his wife. These same beliefs may be shared by the battered woman and by the institutions of our society, like the church and criminal justice system, which reinforce them and teach them generation after generation. In this way, battering is culturally approved.

Myth #4: Only poor people and minorities batter.

- Fact #4: Battering cuts across all races and classes. It occurs in rural and urban settings. Two to four million women are battered annually. Poor people are more likely to be counted in statistics collected by public institutions.

Myth #5: She likes the violence. She also provokes it. If she didn't nag so much. He would not beat her.

- Fact #5: No women ever express that they like to be beaten. Women "put up with the beatings so that they don't have to lose the good aspects of the relationship or so that they and their children don't have to experience poverty, other major deprivations or constant fear of being hunted by the abuser. This does not mean that she enjoys the violence. For some women, either choice--staying or leaving--may cause problems.

  Some women say, "He beats me because he loves me." This idea is one that some men and women learn in childhood (i.e. "my parents hit me for my own good; they loved me and hit me.") It is also an idea that is culturally reinforced by television, movies and novels.

  When a woman tries to negotiate with an abusive man for money, food and clothing, the man, if he doesn't want to be bothered, can define her behavior as provocative "nagging". Supposedly, her "nagging" justifies his violence.

  The provocation explanation assumes the batterer is not responsible for controlling his behavior. His violence becomes her fault. This is a form of victim blaming.

  This explanation also assumes that if she changes her behavior, he will not batter. Many women try this only to be beaten again.

  Battered women are not perfect. Many of them get furious at their partners. But her anger is not the cause of his violence. Many of us get angry with our partners and we are not beaten.

Myth #6: His father beat his mother, so he beats her. He learned it in his home; it is intergenerational.

- Fact #6: Although you are more likely to batter if you saw battering as a child, the behavior is not automatic. We make choices. Many children raised in violent families decide never to be abusive. We have data to suggest batterers, not their wives, were more likely to see their fathers beat their mothers. ***Many batterers do not come from violent homes. You can learn to use violence against women and get away with it from many sources outside the family.***

Myth #7: This is a momentary loss of control and not very serious.

- Fact #7: Women sustain serious and repeated injuries. According to Gaylord's study of 100 patients, "All women had the minimum of bruises caused by fist, but 59 claimed that they had been kicked and 42 said a weapon had been used in the attack. In 8 cases a belt with a buckle had been used. Lacerations were present at some stage in 44 instances, usually healed at the time of interview, but a scar could be shown. In 17 cases, attacks had been made with a sharp instrument--knife, razor or broken bottle. Burns and scalds occurred in 11 instances, usually due to the violence having taken place in the kitchen, with hot water or utensils being thrown or knocked over. Strangulation attempts were made in 19 cases.

  Many batterers plan their attacks. Although they describe themselves as being "out of control," they know this explanation allows them to deny responsibility for the violence. Many batterers carefully choose which part of their partner's body to batter and the time and place of the assault .In one study of 100 battered women, all thought they might die during an assault.

Myth #8: It's easy to leave and it's easy to get help. Something is wrong with her.

- Fact #8: This blames the victim. In one study 44% of the women found the medical response useless in protecting them and stopping the violence; 64% found the police response useless; 48% found the social service response useless. It is not easy to get help.

Myth #9: Women never leave or they always go back.

- Fact #9: From research we know it is a normal pattern to come and go several times. Most people would probably take some time before they left a relationship and went to an unknown shelter. Women are not passive in the face of violence. It is scary to leave, to contemplate poverty, to lose your house, and to see your children grieve. Many women leave. This is why the shelters in this country are full and turning women away.

Reasons Why These Myths Exist

The myths: Make it not us, i.e., " this happens to poor or aberrant people." Excuse or rationalize battering, i.e., "he didn't know what he was doing; he was drinking." Minimize the violence, i.e., "it's really not that bad." Suggest it is her fault, i.e., "if only she didn't nag."

Suggest she can stop it. i.e., "go home and try harder." Assume that the family is private--what goes on stays hidden and we can't do anything to stop it. Assume that there is no abuse of power operating between adults, i.e., these are two equals with problems. Excuse the violence: and unwittingly cause us to make an alliance with the more powerful one, the batterer; blame the victim and keep her trapped. Nothing, therefore, has to change.

-By Susan Schuster for PCADV

WHY MEN BATTER WOMEN

Now that we have explored the myths and facts about domestic violence, it is important to understand more about why men batter women. A feminist analysis of woman-battering rejects theories that attribute the causes of violence to family dysfunction, inadequate communication skills, women's provocation, stress, chemical dependency, lack of spiritual relationship to a deity, economic hardship, class practices, racial ethnic tolerance or other factors. These issues may be associated with battering of women but do not cause it. Removing these factors will not end men's violence against women.

Analysis of Male Violence

Feminists believe men batter to achieve and maintain power over their partners in order to get their own needs and desires met quickly and completely. Men batter women because violence is an effective method to gain this power.

There are multiple, secondary benefits of violence to the batterer. A batterer because he finds it fun to terrorize his partner, because there is a release of tension experienced in the act of assault, because it demonstrates manhood or because violence is erotic for him.

The physical violence batterers' use may include assault, disfigurement, sexual abuse, property destruction, violence directed at friends, family or pets, isolation and confinement, or threats to carry these out. Physical violence may involve the use of weapons. It is invariably coupled with non-physical abuse, including verbal attacks on the victim, economic exploitation and psychological abuse.

A woman who modifies her behavior because she fears her partner's violence may be battered even if she has not been physically assaulted. If the man has threatened her with physical violence or if he is aware that menacing gestures intimidate her (perhaps because of her history as a victim or witness of violence), the woman is battered. She is controlled and lives in fear of her male partner because of these threats.

For a man to choose to batter his partner, he must assume that:

1. He is entitled to control his partner and that it is her obligation to obey him.
2. He is a moral person even if he uses violence against his partner.
3. He will get what he wants through use of violence.

4. He will not suffer adverse physical, legal, economic or personal consequences that outweigh the benefit achieved by his violence.

Many men believe that they are entitled to be nurtured by women; that women should serve and obey them; that it is their prerogative to chastise their wives; that they are superior to women; and that women's subservience to men is part of the natural order. Men are allowed to control women and are generally permitted to use almost any means short of homicide to do so. These beliefs and practices are components of the cultural system of sexism, the oppression of women.

Battering is one tool men use to enforce sexism. Battering is the sum of all past acts of violence, and the promise of future violence, that achieves enhances power and control for the batterer. Men do not need to physically abuse women to control them; they may use many other tactics.

The family structure in a sexist society reinforces men's control over women. Men are assigned the ultimate authority in the family. Nothing inherent in the male gender renders men the appropriate wielders of power. Rather, this "legitimate authority" is given to men based on the system of beliefs and values that supports men's control over women--sexism. Institutions outside of the family also serve to preserve men's authority and control over women. Religious, economic, educational, social, legal, cultural and communication systems all support the power, privilege and prestige of men as a class over women and of a husband over his wife.

In this culture violence against women is often tolerated and is not treated as a "real" crime or moral violation. Because severe consequences for such violence--incarceration, economic penalties or community ostracism--are not imposed, men may choose to use violence to enhance their control over their partners and other family members. Violence within the family is generally condoned, and battering of intimate partners is widely practiced.

All men benefit the violence of batterers. There is no man who has not enjoyed the male privilege resulting from male domination reinforced by the use of physical violence. For example, the man who is admired because he is gentle and nonviolent benefits from the violence of batterers because it makes him "special". The threat of men's violence keeps women in relationships with men who promise to protect them.

Cultural scripts, enforcing sex role stereotyping and according greater power to men, would become gender-neutral scripts but for the violence that subjugates women and thereby rationalizes the propriety of that subjugation. All women suffer as a consequence of male violence. Battering by

individual men keeps all women in line. While not every woman has experienced violence, there is no woman in this society who has not feared it, restricting her activities and her freedom to avoid it. Women are always watchful knowing that they may be the arbitrary victims of male violence. Only the elimination of sexism, the end of cultural supports for violence, and the adoption of a system of beliefs and values embracing equality and mutuality in intimate relationships will end men's violence against women.
-From Qkty for Women: Monitoring Batterers" Program, by Barbara Hart

TECHNIQUES OF CONTROL

Men who batter use various techniques to achieve and maintain control over women. Studies have shown that these are the same techniques used on prisoners during war (L. E. Walker, The Battered Woman Syndrome, 19843. They include:

Isolation. The batterer isolates his partner from her family, friends and others who might support her and challenge his authority over her. In this way he causes her to externalize her conflict in order to avoid experiencing internal distress. He has an unusual need for her to keep his environment stable and non-threatening. Additionally, he has a high possessiveness of the woman coupled with jealousy.

Distorted Perceptions. The abuser has a high capacity for self-deception and deception of others. He presents a distorted perception of reality to his partner (a Dr Jekyll / Mr. Hyde personality). He has an uncanny ability to be charming, manipulative and seductive to get what he needs. He becomes mean, hostile and nasty when he doesn't succeed in getting his wish.

Threats. The batterer uses threats such as: "If you leave, I'll kill you," or "If you tell anyone your problems, they'll laugh at you," to control the woman.

Trivial Demands. He makes many demands, which are often trivial and/or non-achievable. For instance, the woman must cook certain kinds of food; however, she is given no money to buy them or no advance warning to prepare them.

Degradation. The abuser often degrades the woman by calling her names, accusing her of sexual infidelity, questioning her competence or making her perform degrading acts.

Occasional Indulgences. The batterer gives a show of "love", such as presents or flowers, which are far from love. These indulgences serve to confuse the victim and to ensure that she will remain with him after periods of abuse.

Exhaustion. The abuser uses interruption of sleep patterns and sleep deprivation to keep his partner in a state of exhaustion. This wears down her defenses and enables him to maintain control over her.
-Adapted from Lancaster Shelter for Abused Women

Why do men abuse their wives? Public opinion supports traditional family relations and male authority. The battering syndrome is both cause and effect of stereotyped roles and the unequal power relations between men and women. No social class is exempt. Wife abuse occurs in wealthy as well as in poor communities—in middle class as well as working class families. Over the years it has been tolerated by those who govern community affairs, the courts, medicine, psychiatry, police, school and the church. History shows that the helping professions often protected patterns of family authority, unwittingly sanctioning wife abuse rather than condemning it. Most abusive partners are between 26 and 35 years of age; the 36-50 year category is the next largest. 90% do not have criminal records. 40% of men who beat their wives also beat their children. Batterers come from all groups and backgrounds, and from all personality profiles. However, many batterers are characterize by a combination of the following qualities:

Alcoholism and Drug Addiction. Drinking is an excuse for the violent behavior, not the cause. However, his behavior often worsens when he uses alcohol or drugs. Research has demonstrated that between 40 and 9O0/o of physical violence between couples involves drinking.

Bad Temper. An inability to handle frustration is a warning buzzer indicating potential future physical abuse. If relatively minor incidents, such as missing a parking place or being jostled in a crowd, cause a man to seriously overreact, he probably will not be able to handle many of the normal frustrations of an intimate relationship. Wife-beaters are men who cannot handle frustration and turn to violence as a solution to problems. A

man who frequently punches walls, breaks objects or throws things in a rage will most likely turn on someone close to him one day.

Extreme Possessiveness. Perpetrators of domestic violence will go to extreme lengths to isolate and control their partners. One woman was not permitted to go into her backyard because her husband called every hour or two. If she did not answer on the first ring, she might have been beaten. Nor could she talk with anyone else by phone, because her husband might hear a busy signal. This woman was not permitted to go anywhere alone. While the male who batters tends to be a loner, he enjoys the company of his own family and friends. Neither is permitted to the women.

Extreme Jealousy. Men who batter almost routinely accuse their partners of having other sexual relationships. Slight evidence is sufficient to fire their imaginations. A van parked across the street was proof enough for one woman's partner. Another accused his wife of fellatio with another whenever she suffered flu symptoms. Such intense, irrational jealousy may arise from the man's own insecurities and projection. He may be having outside sexual liaisons himself.

Abuse Before Marriage. Physical abuse during courtship is a guarantee of later abuse. The evidence is overwhelming that after one beating there will certainly be more. Once violence becomes part of the couple's dynamics, there is a tendency for this behavior to increase in frequency and severity.

Verbal Abuse. An enormous amount of verbal abuse accompanies physical abuse. A barrage of derogatory labels such as "stupid bitch", "ugly slut", "cheap whore" are heaped upon the woman. Mind games are rampant. Some verbal abuse is less obvious to the abused party. It can be so subtle in fact that the woman is unable to identify the intent of the words. She accepts the judgment that her housekeeping is sloppy, her childcare lax and she is a hopelessly unappealing drudge. Her self-esteem slips even lower.

Violent Family of Origin. Many abusive partners have been abused as children or have witnessed the abuse of their mothers. Violent environments breed wife-beaters. If a child grows up seeing his father regularly beat his mother, he is apt to think of such physical abuse as normal behavior. If a child is abused violently by his parents, the chances increase that as an adult this child will become a wife-beater or a child-beater or both.

Unpredictable Behavior. The woman frequently cannot predict what will bring on a beating. One day, her abuser is tolerant of anything, and the next day he puts her in the hospital for not putting enough catsup on his hamburger.

Cruelty to Animals. Cruelty to animals is a strong indication of a potential batterer. Many men kill animals for sport, and this in itself should not be minimized. But, any man who savagely beats a dog or other pets should be considered a potential spouse abuser.

Minimizes His Violence. The batterer frequently minimizes and denies his violence, both to others and to himself. I n the strictest sense, he is not lying; he is deluding himself. "I didn't hit her" or "I just pushed her a little bit" are almost universally uttered denials. Sometimes awareness of his own behavior is so totally repressed that he will notice his partner's injury that he inflicted the previous evening, and ask, "What happened to you?" Indeed, one of the most crucial aspects of treatment for men who batter is to help them get in touch with their violence. When they acknowledge the truth of their past behavior, they may encounter within themselves a backlog of guilt and revulsion for themselves.

He is Close-Minded. The abuser's way is the only way. He claims to listen to her opinions, but when the decision is to be made, it is his decision.

He Externalizes the Cause of the Violence.
The batterer blames the circumstances for his problems. "If only I had a job, I wouldn't be so upset." "It was the drink that made me hit you." "If you were a better wife, I wouldn't have to hit you." A life-long pattern of avoiding consequences for his behavior effectively limits his sense of personal responsibility for his destructiveness as well as suppressing any motivation for change. The partner becomes a surrogate punching bag. Therefore when a battered woman says, "he needs me," she is right. In one sense, if he can project his faults onto her, then he doesn't have to deal with them himself, and he is able to perpetuate his own blameless state.

Low Self-Esteem. The abuser feels generally powerless and ineffective in the world, and has a poor self-image. This may not always be apparent, since many who appear to be successful may still feel

inadequate. Men often attack their wives when they feel their masculinity has been threatened.

He is a Miser. Another way for a batterer to control his partner is to keep a tight control over their finances. She may have to request every penny she gets. It is tougher for her to leave if she has nothing in her pocket.

He Objectifies Women. The batterer does not see women as people. They are property or sex objects.

12 Signs of a Batterer

1. Jealous
2. Blames others (including you) for his faults.
3. Blames circumstances for his problems.
4. His behavior is unpredictable.
5. He belittles you verbally.
6. He cannot control his anger.
7. He always asks for a second chance.
8. He says he'll change, and that he won't do it again.
9. His family resolves problems with violence.
10. He plays on your guilt
11. His behavior often worsens when he uses alcohol or drugs..
12. He is close-minded. His way is the ONLY WAY.

Abusive to Pregnant Partner

Incidents may escalate during pregnancy or soon after she gives birth. Men who batter seem to want to impregnate her, perhaps to keep her dependent, yet they often don't seem to want to father or nurture a child. It is not unusual for them to tamper with their partner's birth control measures or to assert that they had vasectomies when they have not. A recurring theme is: "If you would have my baby, or one more baby, then our problems would abate." Yet wife-beating has been called "the poor man's abortion."

Child Abuse. Along with beating his wife, the batterer sometimes also beats his kids. We frequently hear women say " I could put up with him beating me, but when he hit the baby, I left that day."

A Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Personality. The batterer is pleasant and charming between periods of violence, and is a "nice guy" to outsiders. Men who have a problem with violence sometimes exhibit drastic personality changes. Much of the time they are gentle and loving husbands and fathers. This is the personality with which the woman fell in love originally and continues to love. Periodically, sometimes in rather predictable cycles, seems to metamorphose into an ogre. Some men display their Dr. Jekyll side to the public consistently. Mr. Hyde only emerges at home. This is doubly treacherous to the partner because others do not believe her when she speaks of his monstrous acts.

His Remorse. The abuser always wants another chance. He says he'll change, that he won't do it again.

All Emotions Are Anger. When he is frustrated, he exhibits that as anger. When he is sad, he gets drunk and picks a fight. Men don't cry. When he is happy and wants to celebrate, he gets high and picks a fight. For men, fighting is exciting and fun. It is a violent culture, and we teach our boys violence.

-Adapted from Women's Center of Montgomery County

Types of Abusers

Men who abuse their partners have many things in common, but there are also many factors that may vary, and the characteristics they have in common many vary in degree and magnitude. For the purpose of discussion, we have identified four types of abusers, but it is important to remember that no person will fit perfectly into any category. Abusers, of course, come from all races, classes, ethnic groups, religions and occupations. Traits they may have in common include insecurity, feelings of powerlessness and an inability to accept weakness or mistakes in themselves or tolerate them in others. They are often strong defenders of the traditional male stereotype,

but feel inferior about their own ability to live up to the image. Many have been trained in the military and have learned how to hit so that bruises do not show. They are usually very possessive and jealous of their mates. Most will deny that abuse has happened or is a problem, instead saying that they "just slapped her around a little," and will rationalize the abuse. Many abusers have a basic mistrust and hatred of women.

It is also important to understand that many abusers of all four types appear very calm and rational in public, even to police officers at the door moments after inflicting a severe beating. Because many only show their violent, irrational side at home, it is vital for you as a counselor to take the woman seriously and function as her advocate.

Rage from Within

This type of batterer was often abused or neglected as a child, or suffered some other type of trauma such as war time experiences. His violence stems from the resulting rage, and he will find an excuse or outlet no matter what his partner does. He may beat her one day because dinner is late and the next day because it is early, although she serves it the same time every day. This abuser will sometimes attack his partner while she is sleeping. He blames his rages on the woman, but no matter how much she changes, she can never please him. Thus he uses his anger to control her. He wants her to stay because she provides him with an excuse to unleash his rage. Although the anger comes from within himself, he does not see that he has any responsibility to control it as long as his partner accepts it. He usually believes his own rationalizations, choosing not to restrain himself, unless he is forced to do so by the courts or by his mate's leaving or threatening to leave.

Rightful Privilege

This type of abuser really believes that it is not only his right, but also his duty to hit his wife when she "gets out of line." He believes that women are inferior and need to be controlled and punished. He is never sorry for his actions and sees all beatings as solely her fault--if she were a better wife, he would not have to punish her. This attitude springs historically from Roman family law, in which the actual word "family" referred to the sum total of a man's property, including his wife, children and servants, all of whom he was entitled and expected to physically discipline whenever necessary. Later, English common law, from which our marriage laws are derived,

limited a husband's right to beat his wife to the use of a stick no thicker than his thumb (hence, The "rule of thumb"). Unfortunately, many men continue to follow this line of thinking.

Interpersonal Conflict

This type of abuser does not know how to handle conflict in an appropriate manner. The violence often erupts out of a conflict between both partners. Neither partner may acknowledge feelings that have built to the point of explosion. Often they have learned in their childhood that physical fights are the normal style of relating, and do not know any other way of resolving conflict. They are usually very impulsive and behave violently without thinking about possible consequences. Often they were overindulged as children and never internalized limits on their anger. These couples usually have a consciously or unconsciously agreed-upon norm of violence which is acceptable to them, and will only consider the behavior abusive if it gets "out of hand", or beyond this norm. It is important to note, however, that even when both partners are abusive, the male is most often physically stronger than the female. If the abuse should range beyond the normal limits, the female is usually at greater risk of serious harm.

Physiological Cause

This type of abuser suffers from an illness that causes him to behave violently. He may suffer from a neurological problem, a brain tumor, an injury or a chemical imbalance. This type of problem involves a personality change and should be suspected as the cause of abuse if a man who has never been violent begins to batter.
--Adapted from Domestic Violence Services Center, Luzerne

Assessing the Lethality of Men Who Batter

Although the lethality of a batterer cannot be predicted with any certainty, the following information can serve as a useful guide. Battered women need to develop an adequate safety plan and to evaluate the effectiveness of legal action contrasted with flight/hiding. This cannot be done without assessing lethality.

Threats of Homicide/Suicide

The batterer who has threatened to kill himself, his partner, the children or her relatives must be considered extremely dangerous. Not all batterers who kill have threatened or attempted suicide previously; however, most have. The batterer who threatens suicide should be considered potentially homicidal. The coupling of homicide with suicide is an occurrence that happens more frequently with men who kill family members than men who kill strangers. Threats or attempts of homicide and suicide must be taken seriously and assessed carefully.

Fantasies of Homicide/ Suicide

The more a batterer has developed a fantasy about whom, how, when and/or where to kill, the more dangerous he may be. Advocates need to explore with a battered woman all of the detail she can remember about threats of homicide or suicide. The batterer may have described events which would "trigger him to commit homicide, suicide or assault. One "trigger" may be her leaving him. Men who have threatened to kill battered women when they leave have all too often attempted to follow through on homicide or suicide. The batter who has previously acted out part of a homicide or suicide fantasy may be more invested in killing as a "solution" to his problems.

Contributing Factors

It is important to emphasize that we cannot ever really know which man will attempt to kill a battered woman or her children. We do know that when certain indicators are clustered, that danger of homicide and assault increases. Thus, the man who has made threats or attempted homicide, or who has fantasies about such action may be lethal, particularly if any of the following factors occur:

Depression

The batterer who has been depressed for a period of time may be a candidate for homicide/suicide. Where a man is heavily in debt or has lost his job, or where the future looks bleak in other ways--these situational stresses coupled with depression might enhance the batterer's consideration of homicide or suicide.

Weapons

Where a batterer possesses weapons and has used them in the past in his assaults on the battered woman, the children or himself, the batterer's access to those weapons increases his potential lethality. When his instruments of aggression are removed, he may look for others or he may not. This does not mean that a man who is intent on homicide will not follow through if he doesn't have his weapons. However, a man who might impulsively, rather than planfully, kill is less likely to kill if his weapons are not in his possession.

Even if a man has never used weapons in his threats or actions or fantasies, the very presence of firearms or knives enhances the chance of homicide or suicide. Accidental homicide sometimes occurs and is obviously more likely when a man has access to weapons.

Obsessive About Partner

A man who is obsessive about his partner, who either idolizes her or feels he cannot live without her, or believes he is entitled to her no matter what because she is his wife, is likely to be more dangerous toward the battered woman. If he keeps calling, works hard to track her down, stalks her at her place of work or waits for her at the places she usually goes, he may be potentially lethal.

Centrality of Battered Woman

It is important to look at how central the woman is to the batterer's universe. The advocate should evaluate how isolated the batterer is. If he is cut off from family and friends or pretty much a solitary man except for her company, he may turn toward thoughts of homicide or suicide, especially if the loss of the battered woman represents or precipitates a total loss of hope for a positive future.

Furious Anger

An angry man can be exceedingly dangerous. He may feel angry because she deserted him, because he believes she has no right to do anything without his permission or because he has lost control over. He may be angry with her for exposing his violence. We are not talking about

uncontrollable urges resulting from anger. Any angry batterer can and does make decisions about whether to commit homicide or suicide.

Drug or Alcohol Consumption

Consumption of drugs or alcohol when in a state of despair or fury can elevate risk of lethality also.

Access to the Battered Woman

Clearly, access to the battered woman is an important factor in predicting lethality. If the batterer cannot find her, he cannot kill her.

The clustering of several factors gives an advocate a better sense of prediction than looking at any single factor. We really cannot predict when a man will kill either himself or his family members; however, we can make good guesses based on our experience. Homicide and suicide are not pleasant subjects. Nonetheless, it is important that we help a battered woman assess the danger that her batterer represents to her life and safety.

Assessment by Advocates and Battered Women

Assessment needs to occur at the time of the crisis call, upon intake, in preparation for legal proceedings and on a continuing basis until the batterer is no longer a part of a battered woman's life. Therefore, it is important that advocates teach battered women how to assess lethality.

Assessment by Community Agents

Advocates may want to share this assessment instrument with people who work with men who batter--police, courts, probation and parole agents, counselors of men who batter, etc. They should also be carefully assessing lethality. They may get sufficient information from the batterer himself; however, batterers often deny or minimize threats or fantasies of homicide/suicide. The community agent may want to obtain supplemental information from third parties in order to complete an assessment of the batterer. Caution should always be taken that the confidentiality of a battered woman is preserved when a community agent seeks information from her. If a batterer hears that a battered woman has spoken with a

community agent, this may trigger a homicidal assault. Similarly, should the batterer hear that a community agent has sought this information from third parties, he may very well blame the battered woman for this intrusion on his privacy and this may precipitate a homicidal assault. Thus lethality assessment should be conducted most discreetly and information obtained from persons other than the batterer must no be shared with him.
-Adapted from Safety for Women: Monitoring Batterers' Program, by Barbara Hart

Men Who Beat Their Wives

Men who beat their wives are a cross-section of the average American male population. They are upper class, middle class, working class and lower class. They are in prestigious professions such as medicine or politics. They are assembly line workers, ministers and the chronically or temporarily unemployed. They come from every ethnic group and every educational background. As with any cross-section of the population, some have criminal records for other sorts of crimes; a large number have no criminal record and probably never will. Often these men are models of decency in the presence of friends and associates; it is only in the privacy of their homes that they abuse and terrorize their wives.

Physical cruelty to wives is not and never has been confined to the lower class or working class. The often-described "middle class distaste for violence" could more accurately be termed a "distaste for visible violence." Wife battering is certainly less visible in the middle class, in part because while lower class victims due to financial constraints turn first to the police for help and thereby add to the police blotter statistics. Middle and upper class victims turn to private physicians and psychiatrists. In divorce proceedings both lower class wives and middle and upper class wives cite physical cruelty as grounds for divorce. In one study in which applicants for divorce were interviewed independent of the court setting, 40.l% of the lower class wives and 22.8% of the middle and upper class wives considered physical abuse a major factor in their decision to seek a divorce (George Levinger, "Sources of Marital Dissatisfaction Among Applicants for Divorce", American Journal of Psychiatry It is unclear in the study whether middle class wives are simply more reluctant to admit to having suffered physical abuse from their husbands. In general, violence is considerably less visible-and audible--in suburban one-family houses set behind lawns than in cramped, thin-walled apartments in the city. This says nothing about the relative frequency of wife battering among middle class families as compared with lower class families, simply that it tends to go unnoticed in

the first case, by both the authorities and the neighbors, and to be fairly visible in the second case.

Other factors also affect the visibility of the crime. Middle class and especially professional men are quite conscious of the fact that they stand to lose prestige and/or job standing if it is ever discovered that they abuse their wives. Many women report that their husbands are "practiced beaters" who aim for the breasts and stomach rather than the face where abrasions or bruises can be easily concealed (Del Martin, Battered Wives, 1976). For any woman who is economically dependent on her husband, the realization that his job, and consequently the welfare of her and her children, may be jeopardized is a powerful reason for keeping her abuse a secret.

Men who observed their mothers being beaten by their are more likely to later beat their own wives (Richard Gilles, The Violent It would be false, however, to see wife battering as a closed, self-perpetuating within a few "sick" families. The power of physical force may be learned by some boys from observing their parents, but in many cases it is simply picked up from the attitudes and practices of the larger society.

In a fairly large percentage of wife battering, alcohol is involved. In a study of 44 violent families, sociologist Richard Gelles 48 % of the episodes of domestic violence were alcohol linked (The Violent Home, 1972). Another study of 1,388 cases of violence puts the percentage where the accused had used alcohol considerably lower at 30%(Morton Bard and Joseph Zacker, "Assaults and Alcohol Use in Family Disputes", Criminology, 1974. Obviously the problem cannot be attributed solely or even largely to alcohol. There are plenty of cases of wife battering where alcohol is not involved, and some wife beaters who are alcoholics beat their wives when they are sober as well as when they are drunk. Gilles has suggested that rather than men beating their wives because they have been drinking, they drink so as to be able to claim that they were not responsible for their actions.

Del Martin, author of *Battered Wives,* has indicated that wife battering may be particularly prevalent in families where the husband is or has been in the military. She conjectures that:

The military is after all, a school for violence. No matter how peaceful or sensitive a man may be before he enters the military, once in he is processed by a totally male machine to become an agent of war. He is taught to idealize aggression and rugged masculinity. Under the tight control of an authoritarian, hierarchical and highly disciplined system

he learns to maim and kill other human beings. He must become immune to the horror of what he is doing not only because it is done for a supposedly righteous cause, but also because he must live with it on a day to day basis. Violence becomes his daily bread: brutality is often his means of survival. When the war is over or his time is up, presto! He must instantly transform himself into a peaceful man and a gentle husband.

Clearly "idealization of aggression" and "rugged masculinity" as well as the equation of manhood with domination are essential enough aspects of our entire culture that men with service backgrounds could not possibly account for all wife beating. Nevertheless the correlation is an interesting one because the military with its ill-concealed hostility to women and its violence-prone atmosphere typifies (albeit in an exaggerated form) many of the normative values of our society. It also points out another problem that is undoubtedly linked to wife battering, the ideal of masculinity itself. This tends for the most part to be something men can never really attain, and something before which they will always feel inadequate.

In fact, a number of researchers have focused on wife battering as a response to feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness, especially economic powerlessness. William Goode says that a family member uses violence as a resource to compensate for lack of other resources such as money, education and prestige ("Force and Violence In the Family", Violence in the Family, 1974). Empirical evidence does seem to support a correlation between fluctuating unemployment - status and wife-beating (Steinmetz and Straus, Violence in the Family, 1974) but the "resource theory" does not explain why wives who, on the whole are more powerless and possess even fewer resources than their husbands, are less likely to strike out at them. Frustration from lack of resources may be a factor in wife-beating, but the real question is why it has become so common, and apparently acceptable, for men to vent their frustrations by violent attacks on women, particularly the women closest to them.

Significantly, few wife batterers seem to think that there is anything morally wrong with what they are doing. Nor do they think of themselves as in any way "sick". They are reinforced in these beliefs by the police, who are frequently more sympathetic to them than to the victim, and by the courts which routinely refuse to try wife-assault cases, or which let off the husband with probation or a small fine and the freedom to return and further abuse his wife. As with rape cases the blame is often shifted on to the victim rather

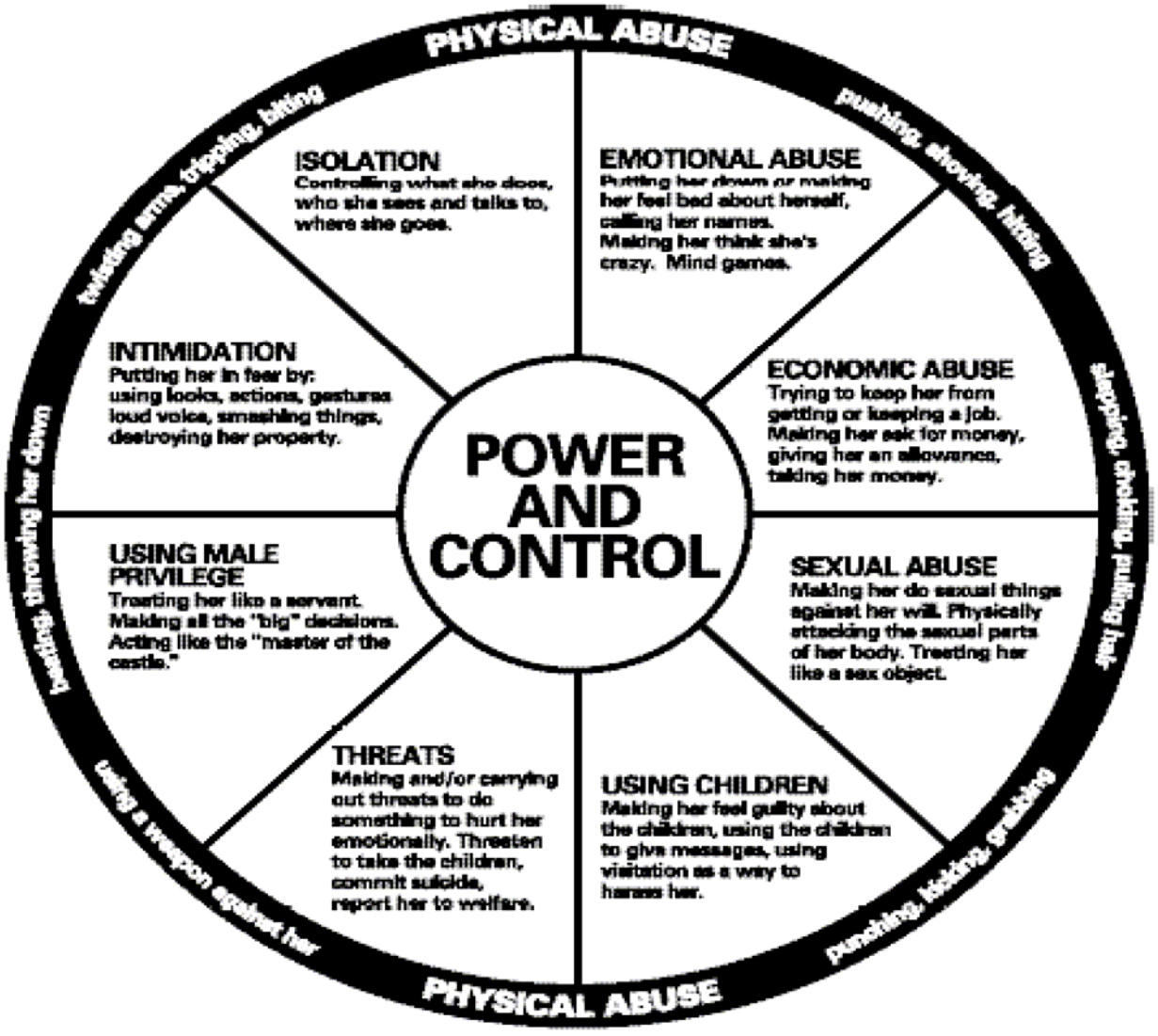
than the accused. Men rarely consent to counseling or therapy to help them overcome their abusiveness because they see wife beating as a husband's prerogative, a "right" that comes along with the marriage license. It must be remembered that these men live in a society which tacitly and sometimes blatantly condones "slapping a woman around to keep her in her place," still adheres to the idea that "a man's home is his castle" and continues to circulate the myth--via television, pornography, romantic novels and a host of other methods --that women "enjoy being physically dominated" and "bring it on themselves."

The major point that must be made about wife abuse is that it is not a problem of a few "sick" individuals. Richard Gelles has pointed out that many wife beaters cannot be categorized as "sick" at all in the usual sense of the word. The problem of wife abuse must be seen in the context of a society that condones and even encourages the use of power in the form of physical force if necessary, in order to coerce women to perform in ways that have been defined not by them, but by the one most directly wielding the power, in this case a husband.

Wife beating is far and away the most common violent crime in America and probably the world. In Chicago, domestic violence accounted in one year for more police calls than all other types of violent crime combined. At Boston City Hospital 70% of the assault victims received annually in Emergency are women attacked in the home .In New York 45,000 cases of wife abuse are brought to trial annually, while current estimates nationally are that only one in ten cases of wife abuse are even reported. Clearly the perpetrators of these grim statistics are in some sense "ill" but we must ask ourselves, however, why there is such a consistency both in their behavior an in the ease with which they get away with this behavior. Betsy Warrior, author of *Wife Beating* (1975), has written *"when mental illness finds its expression so often in similar behavior patterns we have to assume the behavior is tolerated or even reinforced in some way by the culture that sustains it."* We are participants in the crime of wife abuse insofar as we, in turn, continue to sustain those aspects of our culture that ***"tolerate***" or "***reinforce***" it. These may be the refusal of police and other authorities to deal with the problem, the myth that it is the work of a few sick individuals or that women really enjoy it, or the all-encompassing norm which makes it the unalienable right of men to define how women behave, backed up by tacit societal approval of the use of whatever enforcement procedures are deemed necessary. --By Margaret Hunt

Module 1 – Reading 4

Power and Control Wheel


PHYSICAL ABUSE
twisting arms, tripping, biting
pushing, shoving, hitting
ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, where she goes.
EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down or making her feel bad about herself, calling her names. Making her think she's crazy. Mind games.
INTIMIDATION
Putting her in fear by: using looks, actions, gestures loud voice, smashing things, destroying her property.
ECONOMIC ABUSE
Trying to keep her from getting or keeping a job. Making her ask for money, giving her an allowance, taking her money.
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant. Making all the "big" decisions. Acting like the "master of the castle."
SEXUAL ABUSE
Making her do sexual things against her will. Physically attacking the sexual parts of her body. Treating her like a sex object.
THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her emotionally. Threaten to take the children, commit suicide, report her to welfare.
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children, using the children to give messages, using visitation as a way to harass her.
PHYSICAL ABUSE

Developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
202 East Superior St., Duluth, MN 55802, 218-722-2781.
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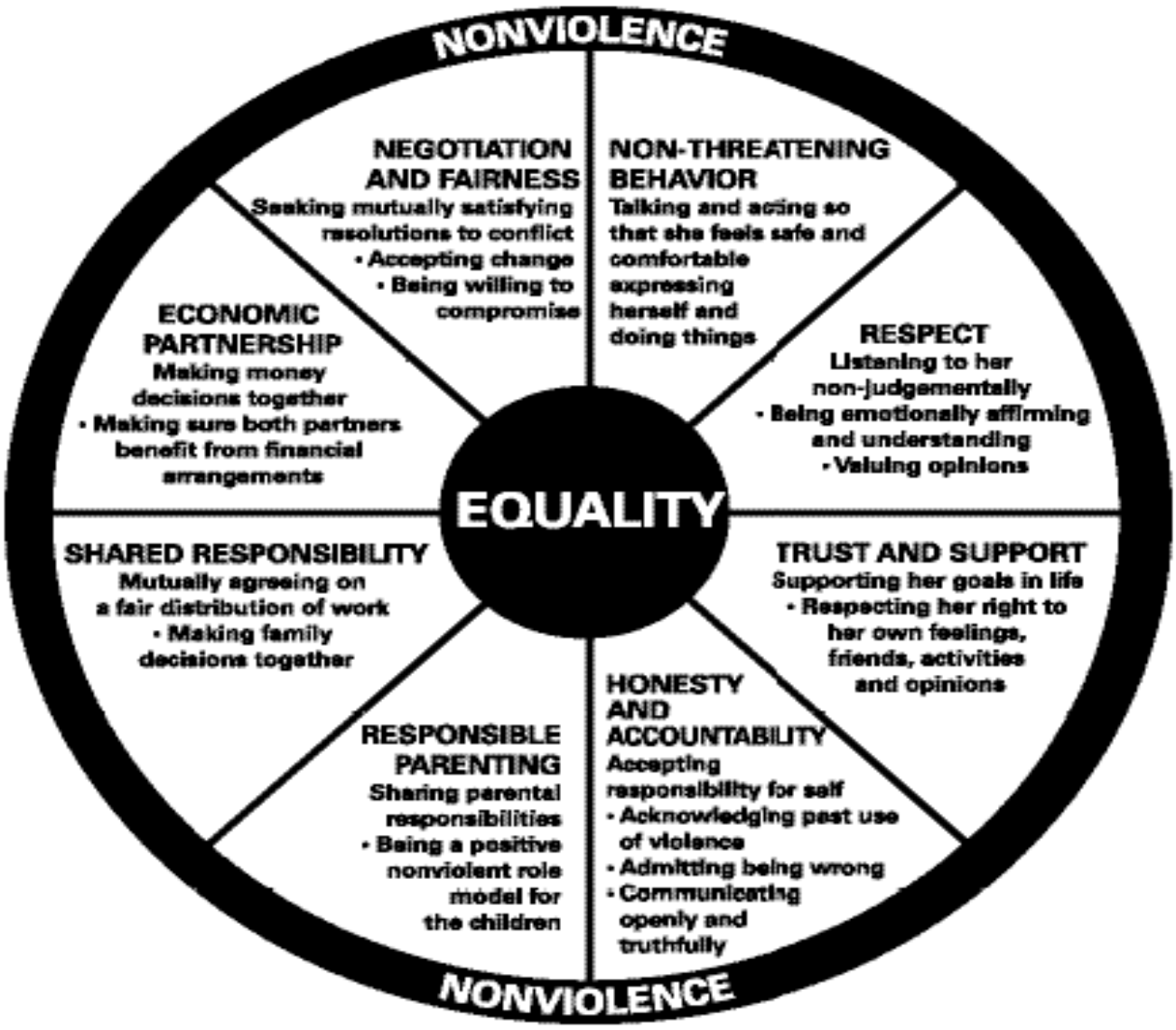
Module 1 – Reading 5

Equality Wheel


NONVIOLENCE
NEGOTIATION AND FAIRNESS
Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict
• Accepting change
• Being willing to compromise
NON-THREATENING BEHAVIOR
Talking and acting so that she feels safe and comfortable expressing herself and doing things
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
Making money decisions together
• Making sure both partners benefit from financial arrangements
RESPECT
Listening to her non-judgementally
• Being emotionally affirming and understanding
• Valuing opinions
EQUALITY
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work
• Making family decisions together
TRUST AND SUPPORT
Supporting her goals in life
• Respecting her right to her own feelings, friends, activities and opinions
RESPONSIBLE PARENTING
Sharing parental responsibilities
• Being a positive nonviolent role model for the children
HONESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Accepting responsibility for self
• Acknowledging past use of violence
• Admitting being wrong
• Communicating openly and truthfully
NONVIOLENCE

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WHY BATTERED WOMEN STAY

In the previous section we looked at why men batter. We now turn our attention to the question of why women stay. It is interesting, at this point, to note that the question of why women stay is asked far more frequently than the more appropriate question--"*why won't batterers let women leave*?" This is indicative of the victim-blaming viewpoint held by so many when attempting to understand domestic violence.

When discussing the reasons why battered women stay, all too often the explanation given by such "experts" as criminal justice personnel and mental health practitioners has been based on the cultural myths about domestic violence. This has placed the blame on supposed deficiencies within the battered woman herself. In spite of efforts to educate the public about the facts, recent trends in pop psychology have continued to blame women for their own victimization, as is evident in the high number of best-sellers in this area (i.e. Women Who Love Too Much; Smart Women—Foolish Choices; Men Who Hate Women and Women Who Love Them).

Why Battered Women Don't Leave Home

Dear Editor:

Your Dec. 11 Week in Review article "When Battered Women Kill": in suggesting stereotypes of which juries could be &abused, perpetuates another stereotype: that battered women stay with abusive men for such vague reasons as low self-esteem. Hogwash!

You stay because: Anywhere you can go, he can go. When he finds you, his rage will make former abuse seem mild He had told you that if you try to leave, he will find your child at school and take it out on her, or on your pet, or on your parents.

Your friends have become alienated, and you have nowhere to go. If you do know people who may accept you, you inflict him on them, and few people are altruistic enough to put up with that. I learned this the hard way, when a policeman told me that my violent husband was my problem, that I had no right to inflict him on the police.

He lies convincingly. So you run away and the police bring you home after he explains that you are insane and must be returned to his custody. Professionals find it hard to believe that a quiet, amiable and educated man would do such things, especially since he never does it with witnesses around You finally get him to go with you for counseling/ and the counselor tells you that you both must trust and communicate. Over your frantic

surreptitious protests, what you told the counselor in confidence is repeated to your husband, who reacts with quiet, intelligent concern. The satisfied counselor then tells him you had assumed he would react with anger and violence. The counselor sends you on your way with a paean, to talk and communication--and as soon as your husband gets you alone, he beats the tar out of you.

You got into the fix because you never expected a quiet, amiable man to be abusive. The first times he did it, his tears afterward made you sorrier for him than for yourself somehow it seemed to be your fault, because you didn't love or trust or support enough.

Later, when the counselor agrees it was your fault, all you know is you've tried everything and can 't get away. I was lucky. There are years and hundreds of miles between me and my ex-husband now, but I still remember with special bitterness the psychiatrist, doctors and policemen who told me that I must enjoy or need such treatment, or I would never have put up with it.

--(Name Withheld), Mercer County, NJ, Dec. 12, 1983, New York Times

Rights of a Battered Woman

With the prevailing attitudes working against women, it is important to inform battered woman of their rights and to show them that the abuse is not their fault. Empowerment can only be achieved when battered women recognize that they do not deserve to be abused.

She has the right not to be abused.
She has the right to anger over past beatings.
She has the right to choose to change the situation.
She has the right to freedom from fear of abuse.
She has the right to request and expect assistance from police or social agencies.
She has the right to share feelings and not to be isolated from others.
She has the right to want a better role model of communication for her
children.
She has the right to be treated like an adult.
She has the right to leave a battering environment.
She has the right to privacy.

She has the right to express her own feelings and thoughts.
She has the right to convey her thoughts and know that information will
remain confidential.
She has the right to develop her own individual talents and abilities.
She has the right to legally prosecute her abuser.
She has the right not to be perfect.
She has the right to control her own finances.
She has the right not to be abused physically.
She has the right to have control over all aspects of her life.
--Adapted from AWARE, Mercer County

Reasons Women Might Remain in a Violent Relationship

Attitudinal Factors:

1. Belief that the violence is temporary and/or caused by unusual circumstances. Hope that the violence will soon stop. This is especially likely after only one or two violent incidences.
2. Belief that she is the cause of the violence. Her abuser is punishing her for her inability to act properly. Such beliefs would also imply that leaving one relationship would be useless since a new man would also tend to physically abuse her.
3. Belief that she should understand her attacker and help him to stop his violence. This would be part of the wifely role. Her inability to help him may indicate that she is failing in her role.
4. Belief that all men are violent This is reinforced by growing up in a culture in which physical aggressiveness is considered manly. It may come from being raised by violent parents.
5. Feelings of personal incompetence where she feels that she needs her man, even though he is violent, to get by in the world. Such feelings might be especially strong if combined with #2 or #3.

Situational Factors:

6. Fear of more severe physical attack from her abuser or of harm to her children if she tries to leave. He may create these feelings through direct threats.
7. Financial dependence on her abuser so that she will have difficulty finding

a place to go. This is a special problem if combined with other reasons below.
8. Lack of social support so that she has no friends of family who can or will help her physically leave and/or deal with attitudinal barriers.
9. Lack of support from societal institutions. Until the institution of Women's Centers, there was frequently no social agency that would help battered women.
--By Dr. Irene Frieze 1978;from Lancaster Shelter for Abused Women

WHY DO THEY STAY? WHEN DO THEY LEAVE?

Hope for Change

Many abusive mates become remorseful after inflicting violence. This contrite behavior may include promising never to hit again, agreeing to seek counseling if the victim does not leave, reminding the victim of how hard the perpetrator works, pointing out the incredible stresses under which he is operating, acknowledging the wrongfulness of his violence to the children and asking their help in stopping it, and demonstrating his love for her in meaningful ways. Since battered women are in committed relationships and have often built their lives around the relationship, they hope for change. When the batterer acknowledges the error of his ways, when he breaks down and cries out his despair, and concedes the need for dramatic change, hope is often born anew for the battered woman.

Isolation

Many battered women lose their support systems. The batterer has isolated them. For example, a batterer may prohibit the woman from using the phone; may humiliate her at family gatherings; may insist on transporting her to work; may censor her mail, etc. Men who batter are often highly possessive and excessively jealous. They believe that they "own" the battered woman and are entitled to her exclusive attention and absolute obedience. The batterer knows that if the truth is told about his conduct, support persons will urge the battered woman to leave or seek assistance. Therefore, batterers quickly isolate battered women in order to sustain the power of their violence.

Societal Denial

Battered women fear that no one will believe their husbands or partners beat them. Batterers often are very ingratiating and popular men who keep their terrorizing, controlling behaviors within the family behind

closed doors. The battered woman knows this, and it compounds her fear that no one will believe her. Battered women discover that many people and agencies in the community trivialize the impact of violence (e.g. doctors prescribe Valium for coping; ministers recommend prayer and more accommodating behaviors; therapists advise better communications with the perpetrators, etc.) No one understands that she feels like a prisoner who might be severely injured or die at the hands of her jailer. She concludes that since they don't understand the seriousness of the violence, they will not support her disruption of the family.

Barricades to Leaving

Even when women decide to leave, batterers put up many barricades. The batterer may threaten to seek custody of their children, to withhold support, to interfere with her employment, to advise prospective landlords that she is not credit-worthy, to try to turn the children or family against her, to threaten to kill her or other family members if she leaves, to threaten retaliatory suicide or in other ways to exalate his violence in an attempt to hold her in the relationship.

Belief in Batterer Treatment

Battered women are reluctant to leave when their partners are in treatment. They believe the treatment will motivate them to make the profound changes necessary to stop their battering. Therefore, it is very important that battered women are referred to domestic violence programs so that they can gain full information about treatment programs for batterers and evaluate whether these programs are likely to effect the change that will make life safe for them. (Gondolf 1988; Okun, 1986)

Danger in Leaving

Many battered women believe that leaving is not necessarily going to make their lives or the lives of their children safer. In many instances where batterers murder women, they do so after she has left or separated. (Casanave nd Kahn, 1986; Browne and Williams, 1987)

Economic Autonomy

But battered women do leave. The most likely predictor of whether a battered woman will permanently separate from her abuser is whether she has the economic resources to survive without him. Therefore, it is incredibly important that battered women's programs where they can learn

about other economic supports, job training and employment opportunities. (Gondolf, 1988; Okun, 1986)

Leaving Is A Process

Most battered women leave and return several times before permanently separating from the batterer. Leaving is a process. The first time a battered woman leaves may be a test to see whether he will actually get some help to stop his terrorism. When he is violent again, she may leave to gain more information about resources available to her. She may then reconcile and begin to get some economic and educational resources together in case she decides that she must later leave. She may next leave to try to break out of the isolation in which the batterer has virtually imprisoned her. Most battered women eventually leave. (Okun, 1986) Leaving must be done in a way that does not further jeopardize the victim's safety. It is important for victims to be referred to domestic violence programs to develop plans for safe leave-taking. -Adapted from the DV Handbook

A Number of Reasons

Experts tend to define the reasons why women stay under these three categories: *resources, institutional response and traditional ideology*.

Resources

- Most women have at least one dependent child.
- Many are not employed.
- Parents are either, distant or unable, and unwilling to help.
- Many have no property that is solely their own.
- Some lack access to any cash.
- She may be charged with desertion if she leaves.
- She may lose her children.
- She may lose joint assets.
- Standard of living may change.
- Children, especially the older ones might resent this.
- The women, or the children may be in poor health.

Institutional Response

- Until recently, the "sanctity of the home" was looked upon as more important than providing help to abused women.
- The Church and secular counselors often recommended that the couples stay together "for the children."
- Police officers, who dislike domestic calls, often do not provide support to women, sometimes even extending "understanding" to abusers.
- Police officers often try to dissuade victims from filing charges.
- Prosecutors are often reluctant to press these cases. They feel they must out pressure on the victim to make sure they are serious and that their time will be worthwhile.
- Judges rarely levy the maximum sentence upon convicted abusers. Most often it is a fine or probation.
- Despite the uses of injunction, there is little to prevent an arrested and released husband from returning and beating up the victim again.
- Despite the rapid increase in numbers over the last few years, the number of institutions, such as houses or shelters, available for the women to flee to safety are still limited.
- Medical authorities, both at the hospital or at the doctor's office, are often unsympathetic or feel getting involved is not their task.

Traditional Ideology

- Many women do not believe divorce is a viable alternative, seeing marriage "until death do us part" under all cases.
- Some mothers fear that single parenthood is so likely to produce delinquency among their children that it is better to give their children a wife-beating father than no father at all.
- Many women are socialized to believe that they have failed as a woman if their marriages have failed; and they consequently remain, absorb continued punishment, and fight against hopeless odds.
- Many women are emotionally dependent upon their husbands, having left their fathers who took care of them and going directly to husbands "who took care of them."
- Many women have become isolated from friends and families. Some of this isolation may have been forced upon them by a jealous and possessive abusive husband, or it might be self-imposed by women

who are ashamed that the visible signs of wife beating might be seen by friends or family.

- Many women are trained to be helpless, to be dependent upon a man, and are unable to take initiative to escape from the situation. Because many are trained to believe that a "successful marriage" depends upon them, many women blame themselves for the abuse. They have been bad or provocative and therefore deserve the physical abuse.
- Many victims have a very low self-esteem and worth.
- Many women rationalize their situation, blaming the abuse on heavy stress, alcohol, problems at work, unemployment.
- Abusers are rarely beating their wives all the time and, in fact, spouse abuse sometimes comes in cycles. During the non-abusive periods, the husband is exceedingly romantic, fulfilling some women's dreams of romantic love. This leads some women to believe that beneath it all she still loves him or that he is basically good or if only he didn't drink, he would be okay.

- Many women are taught that their identity and concept of self-value are dependent upon their getting and holding a man. Consequently, they will suffer tremendous abuse to hold that man and avoid losing him. Loss of the man not only means being alone, but a loss of self-worth because of failure to hold the man.

While all three categories contribute to women remaining with abusive husbands, most researchers agree that traditional ideology is probably the most important factor.

-Adapted from 'The Information Series on Current Topics",
Information Aids, Inc., Plano, Texas, 1987

How Do Women Survive?

She lies to him. She says what she thinks he wants to hear.
She uses sex to manipulate him.
She never discloses her true feelings.
She may influence the timing of a beating to ensure her survival. Since she cannot often tell when a beating is imminent, she may provoke him intentionally, knowing that the kids are about to get home, and thus it will be a short beating.
She learns to network, to make friends and cultivate acquaintances.

She may call the police or turn him into his parole officer.
She may take to drinking or drugs to blot out what is happening to her.
She may run away, disappear.
She may, in desperation, kill her abuser.

From the outside, these strategies make the woman seem horrible: what sort of woman lies, manipulates or drinks and takes drugs? Outsiders, including those in the helping professions, may justify his violence because of her "bad character." In viewing these and similar behaviors as responses to the violence or the threat of his violence, we as advocates for battered women must recognize each of these as survival tactics. She is forced to develop to maintain some degree of control over the situation. We have the obligation to rename these behaviors appropriately in the context of the abuse. In so doing we can assist each battered woman in understanding that her responses are instead often evidence of her strengths and efforts to save herself and her children.
--Adapted from Women's Center of Montgomery County

Battered Women as Survivors:
Comparison of Learned Helplessness and Survivor Hypothesis

Learned Helplessness (Victim)

SEVERE ABUSE FOSTERS A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS IN THE VICTIM. Abuse as a child and the neglect of help sources intensifies this helplessness. The battered woman is consequently severely victimized.
THE VICTIM EXPERIENCES LOW SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-BLAME, GUILT AND DEPRESSION. The only way to feel some control over what is otherwise an unpredictable environment is to think that "If I change my ways, things will get better." But the abuse continues.
THE VICTIM EVENTUALLY BECOMES PSYCHOLOGICALLY PARALYZED. She fails to seek help for herself and may even appear passive before the beatings. When she does contact a help source, she is very tentative about receiving help and is likely to return to the batterer despite advice or opportunity to leave.

Survivor Hypothesis

SEVERE ABUSE PROMPTS INNOVATIVE COPING STRATEGIES FROM BATTERED WOMEN AND EFFORTS TO SEEK HELP.
Previous abuse and neglect by help sources lead women to try other help sources and strategies to lessen the abuse. The battered woman, in this light, is a "survivor."

THE SURVIVOR MAY EXPERIENCE ANXIETY OR UNCERTAINTY OVER THE PROSPECTS OF LEAVING THE BATTERER. The lack of options, know-how and finances raise fears about trying to escape the batterer. The battered woman may therefore attempt to change the batterer instead of attempting to leave.

THE SURVIVOR ACTIVELY SEEKS HELP FROM A VARIETY OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL HELP SOURCES. There is most often inadequate or piece-meal help-giving that leaves the woman little alternative but to return to the batterer. The help seeking continues, however.

THE FAILURE OF HELP SOURCES TO INTERVENE IN A COMPREHENSIVE WAY MAY CONTRIBUTE TO INTENSIFICATION OF VIOLENCE. Some observers argue that this tendency may reflect an underlying masochism in the battered woman. The woman may feel that she deserves to be beaten and accepts it as a fulfillment of her expectations.

BATTERED WOMEN AS VICTIMS NEED PRIMARILY PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING TO TREAT THEIR LOW SELF-ESTEEM, DEPRESSION AND MASOCHISM. Cognitive therapy that addresses attributions of blame for the abuse may also be particularly effective in motivating the victim.

INDECISIVE FASHION ALLOWS ABUSE TO CONTINUE AND ESCALATE. The inadequacy of help sources may be attributed to a kind of learned helplessness experienced in many community services. Service providers feel too overwhelmed and limited in their resources to be effective and therefore do not try as hard as they might.

BATTERED WOMEN AS SURVIVORS OF ABUSE NEED, MOST OF ALL, ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT ENABLE THEM TO ESCAPE THE BATTERER. Community services need to be coordinated to assure the needed allocation of resources and integration to assure long-term comprehensive intervention. -From Battered Women as Survivors, by Edward Gondolf

Module 1 – Reading 7

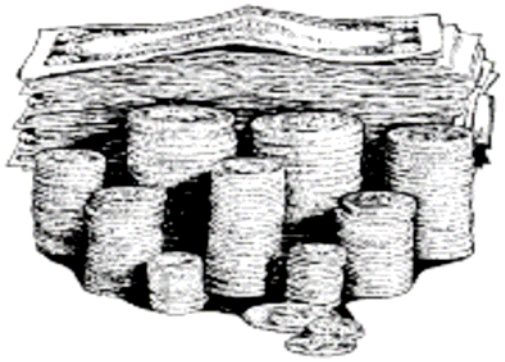
Battered Women's Analysis: Batterer Generated Risks

Physical	
Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	**Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship**
Physical injury: he can continue to hit her and injure her.	**Physical injury:** he may continue to hit and injure her. Some studies have shown he may be more likely to hurt her after she has left.
Death: he may kill her.	**Death:** threats can surface when a woman explores leaving or tries to leave, "If I can't have you nobody will." Leaving does not ensure that he will not find her and may increase the chance she will be killed.
HIV: through unsafe behavior with her partner, she may have no choice regarding sex, including whether to practice safer sex; he may sexually assault her.	**HIV:** unsafe behavior with her partner may continue; he may sexually assault her.

Psychological	
Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	**Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship**
Psychological harm: his use of violence to keep control will continue to affect her and he can continue to attack her verbally and emotionally.	**Psychological harm**: he may continue to have access to her, particularly if they have children in common and there is ongoing contact due to court-ordered visitation.
Substance abuse: she may abuse drugs and/or alcohol to help her cope with the emotional and physical pain.	**Substance abuse**: even if she leaves, she will take an addiction with her; she may abuse drugs and/or alcohol to cope with her new life situation.
Long-term effects: she may experience long-term psychological issues.	**Long-term effects**: she may experience long-term psychological issues.
Suicide (victim, partner): he could commit murder/suicide; she may commit suicide as a result of the psychological effects of his violence or her desire to take control of a death she may believe is inevitable.	**Suicide (victim, partner)**: he could commit murder/suicide; she may commit suicide as a result of the psychological effects of his violence or her desire to take control of a death she may believe is inevitable.

Children	
Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	**Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship**
Physical injury or psychological harm to children: children can witness violence, be the object of physical violence or psychological attack, be hurt while trying to protect their mother.	**Physical injury or psychological harm to children**: children can witness violence, be the object of psychological attack, be hurt while trying to protect their mother, may be at greater risk while on visitation without parent-victim present; no visitation may also harm the child.
Loss of children: child protective services could become involved if violence is disclosed, "failure to protect"-type arguments could be used to place children in foster care or proceed on termination of parental right case.	**Loss of children**: he could legally gain custody or just take the children; child protective services could still be involved or become involved.
Being alone, single parenting: he could be emotionally unavailable; he could do little to help her with the children.	**Being alone, single parenting**: he is unavailable, and she may not be able (or want) to "find someone new": he may not visit or help raise the children; it may not be safe for the children or her to have him do so.

Financial	
Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	**Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship**
Standard of living: he may control the money and give her little money to live on; he could lose or quit his job; he could make her lose or quit her job.	**Standard of living:** she may now live solely on her income; she may have to move out of her home, neighborhood; she may have less money; he could make her lose her job.
Loss of income/job: he could keep her from working, limit how much she works; he may sabotage her efforts to find a job, succeed at a job, or pursue job training.	**Loss of income/job:** she could lose his income, have to quit a job to relocate, have to quit if she has become a single parent; he could keep her from working by harassment, threats.
Loss of housing: she could be evicted due to "disturbance" or damage he has done.	**Loss of housing:** she may need to move out to leave the relationship or go into hiding for safety; she could lose her residence as part of a divorce.
Loss or damage to possessions: he may destroy things of importance or value to her to further his control.	**Loss or damage to possessions:** he may destroy things of importance or value to her to further his control; she may have to leave things behind when she leaves; he may win the right to possessions in a divorce proceeding.



Family and Friends	
Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	**Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship**
Threat or injury to family or friends: family and friends may be at risk, particularly if they try to intervene.	**Threat or injury to family or friends:** friends or family may be at risk, particularly if they try to intervene, protect the woman, provide her with housing; threats can be used to keep a woman from going into hiding – "If I don't know where you are I'll get your family."
Loss of family or friends' support: they may want her to leave and stop supporting her if she stays; they may not like him or may be afraid of him; he may keep her isolated from them.	**Loss of family or friends' support:** they may not want her to leave him; they may blame her for the end of the relationship.

Relationship

Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship
Loss of partner or relationship: he could leave her or be unavailable emotionally.	**Loss of partner or relationship:** leaving means the loss of her partner and significant change to the relationship.
Loss of caretaker: if she is disabled and he is her caretaker, he may not adequately care for her.	**Loss of caretaker:** if she is disabled and he is her caretaker, he will no longer be there to help her.

Arrest, Legal Status

Possible Risks if She Stays in the Relationship	Possible Risks if She Leaves the Relationship
Her arrest: he could threaten to turn her in or turn her in if she has participated in criminal activity; he may threaten this to keep her from leaving; he may force her to participate in criminal activity; she may defend herself against him and be charged with a crime. Arrest could lead to incarceration, loss of job, loss of children, public embarrassment, etc.	**Her arrest:** he could threaten to turn her in or turn her in if she has participated in criminal activity; he may force her to be involved in criminal activity; she may defend herself against him and be charged with a crime. Arrest could lead to incarceration, loss of job, loss of children, public embarrassment, etc.
Partner's arrest: he might be arrested leading to his retaliation, the loss of his job, public embarrassment for her and her family.	**Partner's arrest:** he might be arrested leading to his retaliation, the loss of his job, public embarrassment for her and her family.
Loss of residency status: he could carry out the threat.	**Loss of residency status:** he could carry out that threat.

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Module 1 – Reading 10

In Brief: Substance Abuse and Woman Abuse by Male Partners

Alcohol or other drug use (substance use) increases the risk of men's violence. However, despite the widely-held belief that substance causes men to batter women, neither batterer nor victim are intoxicated in the majority of battering events. In cases of woman abuse where one or both have been drinking, the average amount of alcohol consumed is minimal. On the other hand, over half the men who are seen in batterers' intervention programs and a substantial proportion of victims helped by women's programs are substance abusers. Research does not support the belief that men who batter are out of control when they batter, nor that alcohol or other drugs disinhibit men to batter. Despite the problems in thinking and behaving associated with substance abuse, woman abuse remains a matter of deliberate choice for men who batter.

Different perspectives utilize different variables or factors in trying to account for the seemingly high correlation between substance abuse and woman abuse. Substance use may increase the perpetrator's risk for woman abuse by:

- providing an excuse;
- disrupting his thinking;
- intensifying his motivation to personal power;
- increasing his risk in particular situations;
- altering his brain chemistry;
- magnifying particular perpetrator characteristics; or
- creating dysfunction in his family across generations.

Abstinence from drugs or alcohol is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for non-violence. On the other hand, it is reasonable to believe abstinence improves the chances a batterer will cooperate with legal sanctions and intervention programs. Women with substance abuse problems have usually experienced more violence as children and continue to experience more violence as adults when compared to women who do not have substance abuse problems. A battered woman's abstinence from alcohol and drugs will not change her batterer's violent behavior, but may improve the clarity of her decision-making and her ability to utilize support.

This *In Brief* highlights issues discussed in a longer document by Larry W. Bennett and is available through your state domestic violence coalition.

In Brief: Substance Abuse and Woman Abuse by Male Partners (Rev. 2/23/99)
VAWnet is a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
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THE CASE OF JANET M. – A Case History

Janet M. got married very young to a man in his teens. When he first hit her, she was angry and afraid, but thought her husband's temper would change for the better after they were married longer. Coming from a typical working class background, she was accustomed to seeing a certain amount of male hostility and aggressiveness expressed openly in physical violence toward women. (Other classes tend to hide behind closed doors.) She tended to take this for granted as a humiliating but logical outcome for women, of men's greater physical power and social importance. She found her situation extremely difficult at times, but no shocking or abnormal.

When her husband's behavior was at its worst, she would often think of leaving him, but after the storm had passed and the immediate danger was over, she looked at the other alternatives and found them equally untenable. The prospect of going back to her family was more unpleasant than her marriage, and, being underage she could legally be brought back by either husband or her father if she tried to live an existence independent of either of them. Economics wasn't an important factor at this time in her staying, as she usually worked and had no children, though her income would have barely afforded the most meager existence. In addition, she was socialized to believe that marriages should be worked at, and wives and husbands should try to stick together for better or worse. Almost as often, her attitude was the fatalistic one of "I've made my bed; now I must lie in it," which closely reflects society's view of her predicament--a view that mistakenly suggests that women have a wide range of choices, but prefer marriage over all others.

Janet M. became pregnant and her first child was stillborn. Though she had been beaten when she was pregnant, she attributed the stillbirth to being overworked and underfed. After Janet had her second child, live and healthy, she began to take her situation more seriously and less fatalistically, as another human life was now involved.

Janet first sought help after two years of marriage when her child was a few months old. She called the police when she was beaten. When the police arrived, their manner toward her husband, was friendly, even jovial, but toward her--hostile. Their questions were addressed to her in a belligerent and intimidating manner. "Alright, what's the complaint?" "My husband beats me." "Well, let's see the bruises." After seeing the marks, they offered the opinion, 'That's not much." Then they added in an even more intimidating tone, "Well, what do you intend to do now?"

Janet began to feel puzzled at their hostility, and not knowing the procedure for filing a complaint, replied, "Leave him, I guess." At this, the police looked at each other and at Janet's husband and smirked, "And how are you going to support yourself?" "I'll get a job." "You have a child, don't you? Who's going to take care of you kid? You know your child will be taken away from you if you can't take care of it?" Husband smirked. Police left. And it was a long time before Janet called them again.

Janet became depressed, nervous and fearful all the time. She often felt suicidal or that she was losing her sanity. The situation became more unbearable to her the more she thought of her child's future. But because she had a child, economic independence seemed unattainable to her now.

As the years passed, Janet always thought of leaving her husband. She started out on various plans of escape that never panned out. She took a job to save money to leave,

but made such poor pay that it hardly covered the nursery fee. When her baby was sick, she had to stay out of work but still pay the nursery costs, which meant she lost money. Her son was very unhappy in nursery school, and her husband seemed to suspect what was on her mind and made life harder for her. After a few weeks, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, Janet quit her job.

Janet did succeed in taking a step which was unusual for a woman in her economic position. She looked for psychiatric help and managed to get some through a clinic charging on a basis of income. Since she felt as if she were falling apart emotionally, she believed that if she could only get her head together and have someone to encourage her, she'd find the right way to escape her hell.

But she received no encouragement to leave her husband, no understanding, and least of all, any help. Clutching at straws, she continued to go, week after week, year after year.

A friend of Janet's obtained a legal separation from her husband and got on welfare. Seeing that is was possible for her friend to get welfare, Janet began to think of this solution for herself again. She made some inquiries at the welfare department and was given a very cold reception. Referred from one person to another, at the end of her interview she knew only one thing for sure; that she was not eligible until she was no longer with her husband and had a legal separation. Inquiring at legal aid, she found that she couldn't get a separation either, as long as she was living with her husband.

When things got bad between her and her husband again, she asked him if he would leave. His refusal was adamant, making it clear that she'd never be able to leave him, if he could help it. Janet didn't feel as if she and her child could just walk out in the street with no prospect of a roof over their heads or know where their next meal would come from.

Finally, one day after Janet had been severely beaten by her husband, a friend called on her, was shocked at her condition and offered her a place to stay until she was able to find another. Janet gratefully accepted. Seeing this as an opportunity to establish her living apart from her husband, Janet quickly filed a complaint for assault and obtained a doctor's report on her injuries. She put a few clothes in a bag for herself and the child and left closing the door with finality on her seven-year marriage.

Janet's case illustrates some of the problems women in her situation commonly have. In comparison to other women, Janet was lucky in having a friend who was willing to take her and her child in for a couple of weeks until they could make other arrangements. Many women never get this chance nor feel that they can impose this way on relatives or friends. Often, after having left their husbands, conditions are so discouraging that they give up and go back.

It's apparent that there's a great need for publicly funded houses to be set up to offer women a refuge from impossible marital and family situations until they can find their own way again in society. Many women will be economic and social prisoners of their tormenters until some avenue of escape is opened to them.

-From Domestic Violence Service Center, Luzerne County